

INDUSTRIALISM
in India ~ by ~
William Paton

PRESENT DAY PAPERS
NO. 8.

Pamphlet
.PO-044

by post 7d

Published by :—

Son, Ltd 14, Gt Smith St Westminster, S.W.1.

FOREWORD

These Papers are produced by a group of men and women who, though they differ widely in their political and religious creeds, are united in their belief in the urgent need for a better social order and their determination to see it established. The pamphlets may not always express the same point of view. They are not intended as propaganda but to provide food for thought and discussion.

While the general strike revealed our unhappy national divisions and startled many out of their complacent acceptance of things as they are, it also made manifest the courage and good temper of all classes of the community. There was then no lack of good intentions, but, if we consider life as we live it, we find that we lack intelligent sympathy and the ability to put ourselves in the place of others and appreciate their point of view. We remember, too, how soon we forgot our resolves for social reconstruction after the war.

Looking forward "without malice or vindictiveness," we must study the facts of our social order with a common desire for mutual understanding and for such a re-ordering of our ways as will lead to a better Britain and a better world. We must see industry, as in truth it is, as national service, but, realising our failure to work it as such, we must seek to embody our ideals in the practical structure of society as a whole.

We hope that these Papers may help the constructive thinking of those who desire to win freedom, dignity and happiness for all our citizens, and who long to see God's will more fully expressed in the ways of men.

Industrialism in India

BY W. PATON

[This account of industrial conditions in India will be read with intense interest by all who care for India and also by all who care for the welfare of our own industrial people. It will be monstrous if we allow in India any repetition of the horrors which disgraced our own earlier industrial development, and from the embittering influence of which we have not yet escaped. Moreover we have a selfish interest in the matter. Unless a reasonable standard can be maintained in India, Indian products will drive our own off the market, and widespread unemployment will result. Thus in the matter of cotton, for example, the true interests of India and of Lancashire are identical, and once more we realise the truth of the saying "We are members one of another."]

It is with such thoughts in the background that I hope Mr. Paton's pamphlet may be widely studied.

W. MANCHESTER]

IT is one of the paradoxes of India that while she is one of the eight premier industrial nations of the world, she is not an industrial nation at all. She is an agricultural nation, and seventy-three per cent. of her population are engaged in agriculture and pasture. Yet she is so great and vast a country that the growth of modern industry in recent years has already raised her to the position of a great industrial nation, while yet she is a land of three-quarters of a million of villages.

There has, of course, always been industry in India; both the simple village industries ancillary to the great staple occupation of the people, agriculture, and also specialised industries calling for the de-

veloped skill of the craftsman, and patronised by the courts of rajahs and emperors. When, however, we speak of the problems of modern industry in India, it is not these that are meant but the aggregations in certain areas of industries which have a range far beyond the needs of the village and share in the ebb and flow of world trade. Such are the cotton tracts in Central India and the cotton mills of Bombay and Ahmedabad, the jute areas in Bengal and the jute factories along the River Hooghly, great up-country manufacturing towns like Cawnpore or Amritsar, centres of distribution like Delhi, the coal and iron fields of the edges of Bengal and Bihar, the tea districts in Assam and on the slopes of the Himalaya and the hills in the south, the cotton mills of Madras and Madura, the gold mines of Mysore. It is not only the factory chimney that speaks eloquently of the hand of modern industry in India, but the great broad acres of jute or cotton, grown extensively in those areas where conditions are favourable in answer to the call of a world demand.

Figures show the development of Indian industry. The proportion of imports of manufactured articles to total imports, which was 65 per cent. in 1878-9, fell to 53 per cent in 1907-8, while the proportion of wholly or partly manufactured exports to total exports rose from 8 per cent. to more than 22 per cent. During the fifteen years before 1919-20 the number of factories under the Factory Acts rose from 1,545 to 3,523. The numbers of miners tripled in a similar period.

The object of this paper is to discuss some of the main problems which present themselves as we study the growth of industrialism among the people in India, and we shall find ourselves dealing with the

familiar topics of hours, wages, housing, labour legislation and trade unionism. But there is one aspect of industrial life in India which is very different from anything that meets us in the highly industrialised countries of the West. There is in most of the industrialised areas of India no industrial population. There is a population of agricultural workers who spend part of the year in industry. People come into the factories and mines for different reasons. Some have found it impossible to get a livelihood on the land, perhaps owing to the 'fragmentation' of holdings, or the growth of the family to which the little plot belongs. The lure of alleged high wages in the cities brings others; others again some trouble with the caste or social group. But in very many cases the man who comes will leave his wife, or the two will leave some member of the family behind to maintain their footing in the village, and at harvest time, and at marriage time, there will be an exodus back again to the village home, which exercises a power over the Indian mind at least as great as the thought of 'Home' does upon the wandering Briton. This oscillation between town and country is in a way a protection to the workman, for in time of poor trade, strikes or lock-outs he is not solely dependent on the mine or factory. He is an agriculturist also. Nevertheless the very high percentage of labour turnover—in one Bengal jute mill, and a well managed one at that, it was estimated that the entire labour force changed completely in eighteen months—mitigates against the improvement of conditions, while being itself accentuated by bad conditions, especially of housing. It is a vicious circle. The point, however, to which attention is drawn here is the effect on a rural society of the withdrawal of

some of its members into the utterly different environment of the mine or factory together with their continual return, and the effect on the agriculturist of being gradually turned into a person who is neither a part of the ancient village economy with its tradition and sanctions nor yet fully integrated into an urban society. To those who look deeper into social problems than hours and wages alone these questions of the relation of the individual to society in the new and changing world afford much anxiety.

The worst of the accompaniments of modern industry in India has been the vile housing of the operatives in some of the great centres. The worst is Bombay, but Calcutta, Cawnpore, Ahmedabad and the others are all bad, and bad, be it remembered, not only by Western but by Indian standards. In Bombay the average number of rooms per family is one, but there are numerous instances of four, five or even six families being packed into one room. Land is dear, and the publicity recently given to the Bombay Development Scheme and the immense sums spent on it show how terrible is the problem to be solved when industry has leapt ahead of housing, town-planning and sanitation. The result is, among other things, the appalling infantile death-rate of Bombay, 66 per cent. for the whole city and, it is said, as high as 82 per cent. in the mill areas, as compared with about 15 per cent for the Presidency as a whole.

It is noteworthy that the present Viceroy, Lord Irwin, who has already shown in many ways his profound interest in anything that affects the welfare of the poorer classes, has drawn public attention in a reply to the address of the Cawnpore municipality to the incidence of the infantile death rate in that city and urged the necessity of placing the welfare of the

workers on a par with mechanical advancement. Public conscience is being gradually created in these and similar matters, but difficulties are great and progress is slow. The low level of life in the villages may perhaps be a cause for the slowness of advance ; it is continually said that the operatives are better off than they are in their home villages, which in respect of housing and health conditions is, so far as the great manufacturing regions are concerned, definitely untrue.

We may note further in connection with health and housing the disturbing and ominous fact that while in the rest of the world, led by England and Denmark, the tuberculosis death-rate is steadily decreasing, in the tropical countries it is increasing and not least in India. There can be little doubt (though the subject has not been exhaustively examined) that the crowding of families into insanitary dwellings in the big towns is one cause of the increase of tuberculosis, and may lead also to the increase of the disease in the country districts as the working population flows to and fro in the way described above. It is also an acknowledged fact that opium is widely given to babies in India, and investigation has shown that this is probably most frequently the case in the mill areas. Women give opium to their babies to keep them quiet while their mothers are working at the mill. A comparative study of the figures for opium consumption in the districts of British India shows that many of the areas where there is grave excess are industrial areas.

In the coal-mining areas the housing has been very bad and is still backward, but the Boards of Health established in Jheria and Asansol under the Bihar and Bengal Governments respectively have statutory powers, and have laid down certain minimum re-

quirements for mining cottages with which in 1929 all mining housing is to comply. It is already being seen in the Jheria coal-field that the aboriginal miners are anxious to retain possession of the new houses, and if called back to the village will try to leave some one behind to keep their hold on the house. In the Bengal jute mills somewhere about one third of the operatives are housed in mill-owned property, which is at least enormously better than the foul *bastis* in which the remainder live, hovels often owned by the *sirdar*, the overseer who has probably recruited the people from their village and pays them on behalf of the firm.

Wages are higher in money value than anything the labourer can earn in the village. The average earnings per day in the Bombay cotton mills were given in 1921 by the Wages and Hours Enquiry as for men, R. 1. 5. 6., for women annas 10.9, and for children, annas 11.1, or in rough English equivalents, for men 2s., for women 11d., and for children 11½d. But rents are high—figures for the controlled rents of Bombay show that Rs. 3½ to 5½ is charged for single rooms, and in the tenements of the Development Trust Rs. 10 to 15. Food charges alone take from 56 to 68 per cent of the total budget. It is significant that in regions like Bengal where rainfall is steady and agriculture a fairly reliable occupation as compared e.g. with the famine stricken Deccan, Bengalis do not go much into the jute mills, and more into the ranks of skilled workers than of the unskilled. Factories, that is to say, do not offer a better prospect than village life where it is prosperous, or reasonably so, they *do* offer a better prospect than being crowded off the land or reduced by famine.

The principal line taken by labour legislation in India has been limitation of hours and limitation of

the age of labour. The 1891 Factory Act defined a factory as a place employing not less than 50 persons, limited the work of women to 11 hours a day, and that of children, who might work half time from 9 until 14 years of age, to 7 hours. Both women and children were protected against night work. In the Factory Act of 1911 adult labour was limited to 12 hours work a day, a compulsory interval after 6 hours continuous work provided, and the hours for children brought down from 7 to 6. The latest Act, of 1922 limits the hours of all adult labour to 11, prescribes a 60-hour week, prohibits children from being employed below the age of 12 and permits only half time labour up to 15 years, and, not least important, lays down 20 as the number of employees constituting a factory and permits local Governments to lower the figure still further to 10.

In the mines children may not be employed below the age of 13, but above that age are counted as adult workers. For underground labour a week of 54 hours is prescribed. There are more than 50,000 women working underground in mines. Considerable debate has gathered round this point. In 1925 a strong representation was made by a number of Indian mineowners to the Industries member of the Viceroy's Council, urging that no steps should be taken to remove the women from the mines. It is well-known that many European owners agree. On the other hand the Government of India's Inspector of Mines has pronounced definitely against the continuance of the practice, and it is the easiest thing to find mining engineers and managers who regard the removal of the women as a desirable and practical reform, but are unwilling to say so publicly as they know that they will earn the displeasure of their

managing agents, who represent ultimately the shareholders, in England and elsewhere. On the whole, it is probable that this reform will not tarry much longer. The work done by the women is, in the better conducted mines, to carry from the coal-face to the tub, in baskets carried on the head, the coal which their husbands have cut; in worse-conducted mines they may carry the coal on their heads, up a long slope dripping with water, right up to the surface. Apart from the view held by many people that underground work in a mine is no work for a woman, it is fairly clear that there can be no mining population living decent lives and enjoying anything that can be called a home while the women are down the mines. Already the exclusion of children is beginning to cause a diminution in the numbers of women who work underground.

A Workmen's Compensation Act was passed in 1923. Proposals have been made, notably by Mr. N. M. Joshi in his Bill introduced into the Legislative Assembly in 1925, for the establishment of maternity benefit. This Bill was rejected, but it is probable that legislation will be passed in the near future. Already some of the better firms, including some of the tea-garden owners, have of their own initiative provided maternity benefit, including the payment of wages during and after confinement and a bonus if the child lives to the age of one year. Reports have been presented to the Bengal and Bombay Governments by two medical women appointed by them to investigate the subject, and it is ripe for action.

Those who like to regard the League of Nations and the International Labour Office as a futile sham are probably unaware of the very great debt under which labour generally, and not least in India, lies to

the international action promoted by the Office. The Washington Convention of 1919, which was responsible for the Eight Hours Day agreement (not yet ratified by the British Government) recognising the impossibility of adjusting Oriental standards of labour immediately to any such rule, invited India (and other countries such as Japan enjoying similar conditions) to do four things. India was asked to prohibit night work for women, to prohibit child labour below the age of 12, to fix a 60-hour maximum working week, and to introduce maternity benefit. It will be seen from what has been already written that of these objectives three have been attained, at least so far as legislation goes, and the fourth is under consideration.

In addition to the provision of maternity benefit and the prohibition of women's work during the weeks of confinement, and the removal of women from underground work in the mines, the principal legislative need is probably a Truck Act, removing the abuses of deferred pay and vexatious imposition of fines. There is undoubted force now in the contention that for the elevation of the standards of industrial life India needs now not so much an increase of legislation as an increase in the inspecting staff, whose duty is to supervise and enforce the labour laws already passed. The inspectorate needs to be enlarged, strengthened and better equipped, and this is a matter, mainly, of finance. It is not, however, only a matter of finance, for there is a dearth of women qualified to take up inspecting work, and the training and supply of such women is a task obviously presenting itself to social reform agencies.

Trade Unions are a new growth in India, but they are now to be registered and their functions defined (by a Bill already discussed in the Legislative Assembly)

and they have a great place to take in the India of the future. They will need to be protected against the danger of becoming dominated entirely by those who may use them for political ends, and it is to be remembered that in a country where the mass of labour is illiterate the inclusion of a considerable number of non-operatives in the management of the Unions is absolutely necessary. But they have it in them to do for the city worker, by training him in self-help, what the agricultural co-operative societies have done for the villages in many places. There is a Trade Union Congress in India, but the most efficient of the Unions (leaving aside the railway workers and postal clerks, whose literacy is high) is the one in Ahmedabad among the cotton workers, which owes its strength to the assiduous care of a very remarkable woman, Anusuya Sarabhai, and to the help of Mr. Gandhi.

Mention of the Mahatma raises the question whether his campaign against all mill-made goods and for a return to a simple and more ancient way of life has any prospect of success, and whether it deserves to succeed. A greater contrast could not be presented than that between Mr. Gandhi with his spinning-wheel and simple home-spun garment and the Indian members of the Fiscal Commission of three years ago, with their insistence on "the intense industrialisation of India." It needs little argument to show that India cannot live on the spinning-wheel but that home-spinning is an invaluable auxiliary industry for the village is absolutely true. For at least four months of the year the agricultural worker is idle, perforce, for there is nothing to do on the fields. To such Mr. Gandhi offers the spinning-wheel. We might prefer to say that some subsidiary

village industry ought to be chosen, not necessarily spinning, but Mr. Gandhi knows that he has to win the ear of a vast uneducated public, and he has chosen a simple, easily understood, dramatic way of trying to do it. His success so far has been very partial, but it is probably a wholly wrong estimate of his movement and the possibilities latent in him and his disciples to hold, as is often done by Europeans to-day, that Mr. Gandhi is 'a spent force.' There are many who realise that industrialism has come to stay in India, who nevertheless cannot but sympathise with the Mahatma in his crusade, for they realise the ghastly foulness with which industrial development has defiled some of the cities, and they wish, though they may doubt the possibility of it, that some reversion to simpler and more wholesome ideals of life were possible. The spinning-wheel to Mr. Gandhi has more than the economic significance of a simple industry auxiliary to agriculture. To him it has a spiritual meaning; it stands for freedom from the enchaining luxury of the West, for simplicity of life, for self-dependence. At the recent meeting of the Indian National Congress (December, 1926), Mr. Gandhi again made his plea for *khaddar* (home-spun) and the *charkha* (spinning-wheel), and this time it appears with more success. The significance of his speech lay in this, that he explained his aversion from entry into the Reformed Councils, whether to co-operate with Government or to obstruct business, in his conviction that the development of the inner life and freedom of India must come first, and that without that basis political action is more or less futile. It is for this reason that the three planks in the Gandhi programme are the use of *khaddar*, the removal of untouchability, and the increase of Hindu-Muslim

unity. Diverse as they are, they all alike bear on the social purification and energising of the people. This is Mr. Gandhi's chief contribution to public thinking. The way forward, however, lies not in action which looks merely to the abolition of industrialism, for that is almost certainly impossible, but rather to the improving of village life and also of industrial conditions. If the villages are losing many of their best, it is because they are not attractive enough to hold them, and the development of village education and the regeneration of village life through the improvement of agriculture, the promotion of co-operation and other ways, can do much to stay the rush to the towns. At the same time the improvement of village conditions is bound to react on the industrial centres and to make it even more necessary than it now is to improve the conditions of labour there. If only for the selfish reason that labour must be got, the great manufacturers will find themselves compelled to improve conditions.

It is difficult for the warmest friend of Indian nationalism to hold that as yet Nationalist leaders have shown themselves to any extent champions of the poor or in particular of the industrial workers. So far nothing corresponding to a Labour Party exists. The reason is only partly the overwhelming pre-occupation with politics in the narrower sense. It is true that practically all educated Indians regard the struggle for self-government as the major political issue dwarfing all others. Yet one cannot shut one's eyes to the fact that Indian capitalists and employers are not markedly different in India from those of other lands ; they do not, except in rare cases, consider the well-being of their employees as a main obligation,

and the voices that speak for the needs and rights of the labouring masses are too few.

With education and the growth of co-operative societies, which are a great educative agency, there will in all likelihood develop an Indian Labour movement, which will have its political expression. That day is not yet, but it may be nearer than we think. It will be in our opinion wholly for the good that political affiliations should be created which cut across the bonds of religion and caste, the bane of modern political life in India.

It is another aspect of the same thing that there is so little attention given to the problems of industrial life in the Indian Press. A Scottish Labour M.P. visiting India in 1925 remarked that there were a hundred thousand men on strike in Bombay and that no political party seemed to be much interested! The comment was shrewd, and it is true that public opinion is woefully ignorant and ill-informed on the subject. The mass of books and pamphlets, official and non-official, which pours out of the presses of England and America has little to correspond with it in India.

Welfare work has begun in India, though it is still a small growth. Of welfare work within the factory or mill (which alone is entitled nowadays to the term 'welfare work,' we believe) there is none. Outside the factories there is in some centres a good deal done. In some cases as in the Buckingham and Carnatic Mills of Madras the firms themselves provide workers who are responsible for the social oversight of the labourers. At Nagpur where large mills are run by the Tata Company a notable piece of welfare work is done by the Young Men's Christian Association. Night schools are conducted for the

workers, day schools for the children, games are organised, health supervised and medical attention provided. The firm undertakes the bulk of the expenditure involved, apart from the salary of the foreign secretaries engaged in the work, and it is noteworthy that Indian Christian secretaries have proved themselves in this enterprise of the highest value. These instances are quoted to show the possibilities that await this form of service. There is no reasonable doubt that the field of work could be almost indefinitely increased.

What is needed now is a thorough study of the industrial field of India, to discover the possibilities for increased service along the lines just described and along other lines, should that be found to be demanded, and to discover also the financial resources likely to be available for such work and the steps necessary to secure and to train workers. Such a study is to be undertaken during 1927 and 1928 by the National Christian Council of India, led by Miss M. Cecile Matheson, who is to come out to India for that purpose and who will be aided in India by Indians chosen to work with her.

It may be well to define the reasons why in the opinion of a good many Christians in India, including missionaries, this task is especially laid upon the Church of Christ. In the first place, (though this is perhaps the smallest reason), there are a very considerable number of Indian Christians engaged in the industrial centres, in mills, mines, factories and tea-gardens. It is not, of course, suggested that the only objects of Christian study and compassion should be Christians, but it is entirely proper that the Church should see to it that Christians drawn

from the villages to the industrial centres may be adequately cared for and their conditions of labour rendered, if possible, such as are congruous with the living of a Christian life.

It is perhaps more fundamental to realise that Christians in India have an advantage in dealing with this matter in that they have more contacts than the other religious bodies have with the countries of the West. When all is said and done, industrialism of the modern type is an invention of the West, and is one of the most characteristic aspects of Western life. It has therefore been more necessary for the Christian Church in Europe and America to give its mind to the problems of moralising industry than for the ancient religious communities of India.

Moreover, it is in the Christian West that there are to be found the people who have already shown the possibilities of service to the industrial communities, and who have the knowledge and experience which are needed. It would be altogether wrong to forget or overlook the splendid service of bodies such as the Servants of India Society, founded in Poona by the late Mr. G. K. Gokhale, and identified with countless movements for social reform and unselfish service. There are such men, and women too, but they are few, and they would probably cheerfully acknowledge that there is much to be gained from the example and experience of Western workers in this field. There is, in fact, likely to be an increasingly articulate demand for workers who may be styled missionaries, for they will need all the self-sacrifice and devotion which is associated with the missionary, whether they come to be sent out by missionary societies or not, and whose work would be to serve through welfare work and other ways of friendship

these illiterate and largely helpless communities. There can be no doubt that in the end success will depend entirely on the recruiting and training of Indian workers; the function of the foreigner will be to give at the beginning especially, the experience in which it cannot be denied that in this respect the West is rich.

Most of all, however, the Christian Church must be moved to face these questions by the nature of the faith which it professes. A very leading Indian official, a non-Christian, urged on the writer not long ago the necessity of Christians taking up this work, for, he said, only Christians have a religion articulated in relation to these issues. It is not accidental that this should be so. It is a part of the essential Christian faith in the love of God, in man's worth and possibilities as they are revealed in Christ, and in the divine order of the Kingdom of God.

Indian thought at its best has been absorbed in the question of Reality, and on the whole its answer has been to exclude from reality the world of moral stress and human effort success and failure. To find in the ministry to the oppressed the very presence of God, and in the transforming of this order of things a testimony to the Divine purpose to make all things new—this is a part, and a great part, of the total Christian ministry to India, and it is by this path not least that the spirit of Jesus will be interpreted to her people.

March, 1927.

W. PATON



0 1164 0216317 8

The series is issued by Copec Central Committee,
92, St. George's Square, S.W.1., from whom copies
may be obtained.

Writers

Subjects

Bishop Gore	<i>Strikes and Locks-out</i>
The Bishop of Manchester	<i>Democracy</i>
Miss Margaret McMillan	<i>Poverty in the Modern State</i>
Mr. G. A. Johnston	<i>A World Standard of Life</i>
Mr. Salter Davies	<i>Education for Industry and for Life</i>
Rev. Dr. A. H. Gray	<i>Our present Discontents: An Appeal to Youth</i>
Dr. J. C. Maxwell Garnett	<i>Conciliation</i>
Rev. W. Paton	<i>Industrial Conditions in India</i>
Professor H. G. Wood	<i>What About Industrial Peace?</i>
Rev. G. A. Studdert Kennedy	<i>Religion—A Blessing or a Curse?</i>
The Master of Balliol	<i>The State, the Church, and the Community</i>
Mr. J. St. Loe Strachey	<i>Freedom, Dignity, and Happiness</i>

Members of the Advisory Council

THE REV. M. E. AUBREY
THE MASTER OF BALLIOL
THE REV. F. R. BARRY
THE REV. DR. SIDNEY BERRY
THE REV. HENRY CARTER
MR. VIVIAN CARTER
MR. SIDNEY DARK
SIR WYNDHAM DEEDES
THE REV. OLIVER DRYER
DR. J. C. MAXWELL GARNETT
MR. J. L. GARVIN
THE REV. DR. R. C. GILLIE
MISS G. A. GOLLOCK
THE REV. DR. A. HERBERT GRAY
THE REV. E. E. HAYWARD
THE REV. DR. J. A. HUTTON
THE REV. F. A. IREMONGER
THE BISHOP OF KENSINGTON
THE REV. P. T. R. KIRK
MR. J. J. MALLON
THE BISHOP OF MANCHESTER
THE REV. HUGH MARTIN
MR. HAROLD MORLAND
THE REV. DR. NORWOOD
THE REV. DR. ORCHARD
THE LADY PARMOOR
MR. SYDNEY PASCALL
MR. GEORGE PEVERETT
MR. A. PITE
THE REV. CANON T. PYM
THE REV. CANON C. E. RAVEN
MR. MAURICE RECKITT
LADY BEDDOE REES
THE REV. J. E. B. SAWBRIDGE
MISS CONSTANCE SMITH
THE BISHOP OF SOUTHWARK
MISS HELEN SPENCE
THE REV. MALCOLM SPENCER
MR. ST. LOE STRACHEY
MISS F. STREET
THE REV. FATHER F. UNDERHILL
THE BISHOP OF WINCHESTER
MR. E. F. WISE

LUCY GARDNER

Hon. Sec. to the Council, 92, St. George's Square, S.W.1.